

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. An authentication method for using a plurality of Web servers to allow only a user in a certain group to access information in said Web servers, wherein a first Web server in said Web  
10 servers has a restricted access domain that only the user in said certain group is allowed to access from a client terminal and does not have authentication information regarding the user, and a second Web  
15 server in said Web servers has the restricted access domain that only the user in said certain group is allowed to access and further has said authentication information registered thereto, comprising the steps of:

causing said first Web server to request  
20 authentication from said second Web server; and  
allowing said user to access said restricted access domain in said first Web server from said client terminal based on an authentication result provided to said first Web server by said  
25 second Web server.

30 2. The authentication method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first Web server delivers an authentication information request received from said second Web server to said client terminal and then delivers authentication information received  
35 from said client terminal for said authentication information request to said second Web server.

3. The authentication method as claimed  
5 in claim 1, wherein said second Web server receives  
an authentication request from a plurality of first  
Web servers.

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4. The authentication method as claimed  
in claim 1, wherein said first Web server delivers  
an authentication request to a plurality of second  
15 Web servers.

20 5. The authentication method as claimed  
in claim 1, wherein said first Web server delivers  
an authentication request to another first Web  
server and said other first Web server delivers the  
authentication request to said second Web server.  
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6. An authentication apparatus for  
30 allowing only a user in a certain group to access  
information in a restricted access domain therein,  
comprising:

an authentication requested Web server  
registering part registering a Web server as an  
35 authentication requested Web server, said Web server  
having a same restricted access domain as said  
restricted access domain therein and further having

authentication information regarding the user  
registered thereto; and

an authentication requesting part  
requesting authentication from said Web server with  
5 reference to said authentication requested Web  
server registering part when said authentication  
requesting part receives an access request for  
access to said restricted access domain therein from  
a client terminal of the user,  
10 wherein said Web server determines whether  
or not said authentication is valid and said access  
request is allowed based on an authentication result  
determined by said Web server.

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7. The authentication apparatus as  
claimed in claim 6, wherein said authentication  
20 requesting part delivers an authentication  
information request received from said Web server to  
said client terminal and delivers authentication  
information supplied in response to said  
authentication information request by said client  
25 terminal to said Web server.

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